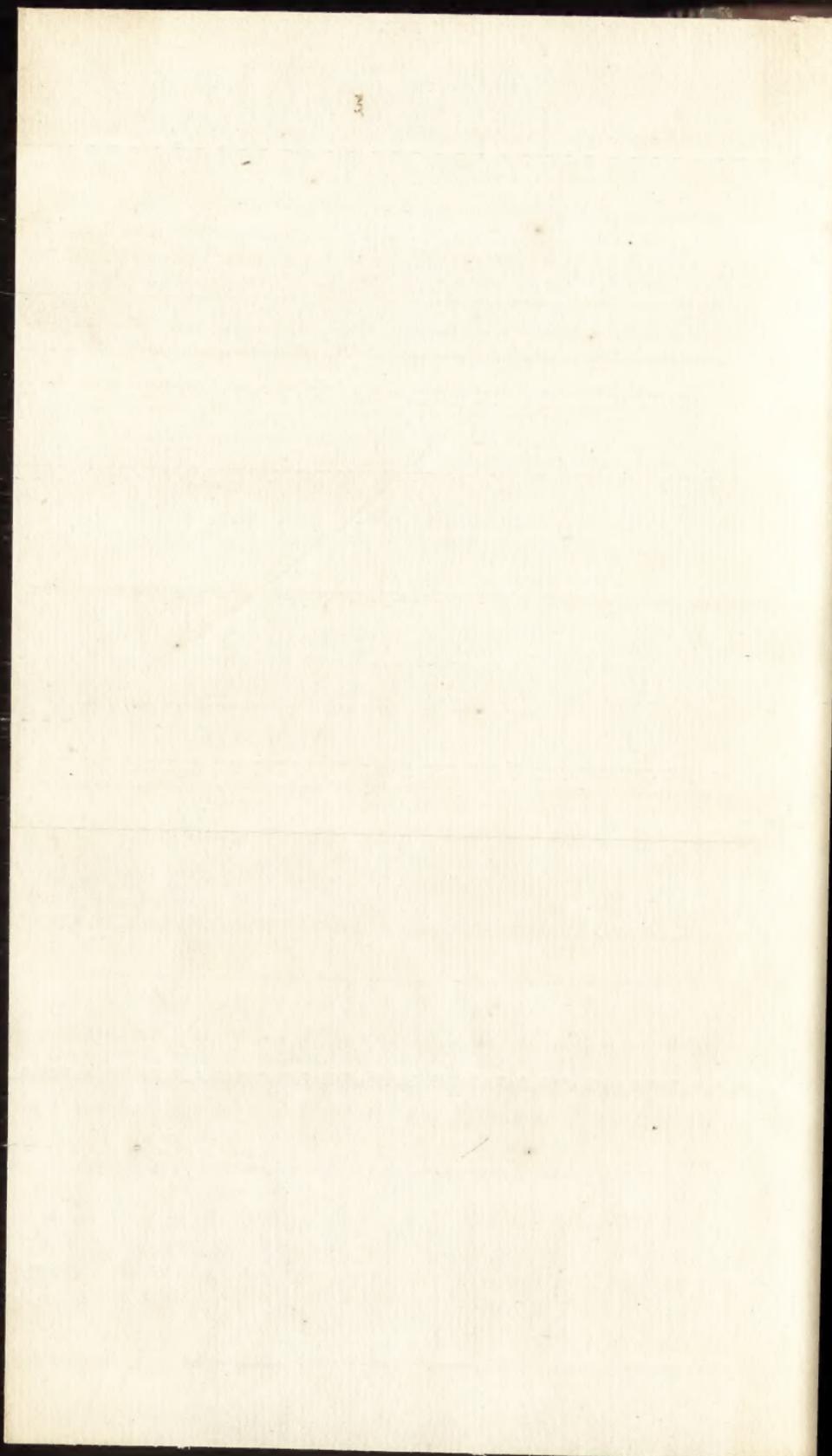


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A N

E S S A Y

O N

LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

John Smith Williams

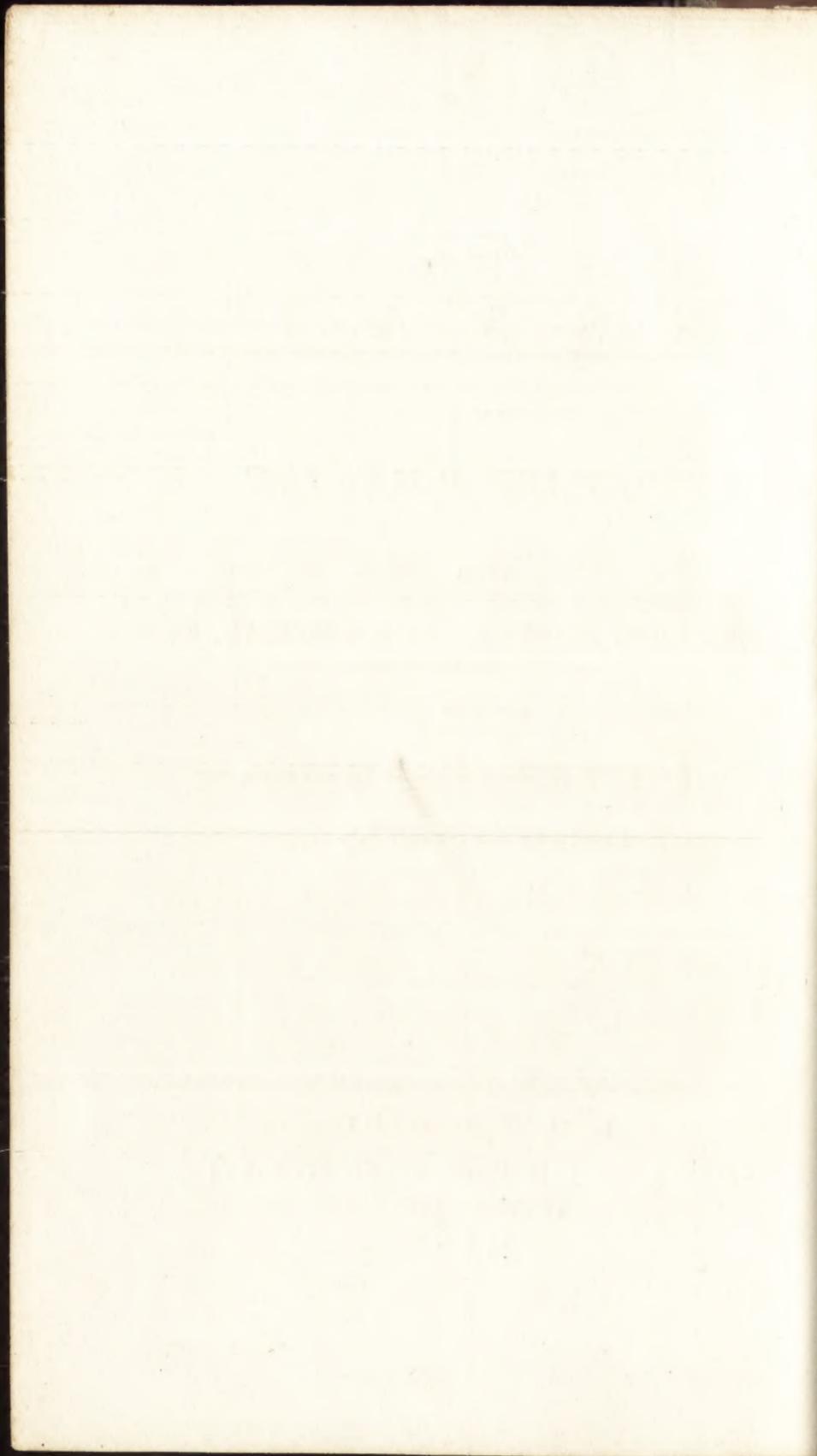
J. Reddor

A N
E S S A Y
ON
LANDSCAPE PAINTING.
WITH
REMARKS GENERAL AND CRITICAL,
ON THE
DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND MASTERS,
ANCIENT OR MODERN.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD.

1783.



TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE following hints have been suggested to the author by some years close attention to the subject; to the works of the best masters here and abroad. They have not been compiled, or, as a celebrated writer expresses it, swelled by the pouring the contents of one vessel into another:

the

the remarks, whatever may be the public opinion upon them, are genuine; and, for the execution of the work, it should be considered, that, in treating a subject of art, there must be tautology where the words are specific.

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AN



A N
E S S A Y
ON
LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE POWERS OF PAINTING IN
EXCITING PLEASURE.

IN contemplating a picture, the pleasure received generally arises from one of two principal causes. Either from an immediate acknowledgement in the mind, of the skill of the painter, his knowledge, the grandeur of his ideas, the excellence of his pen-

B cilling

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cilling, the effect and propriety of his colouring, and his power of forming a whole ; or from the perception of a strong resemblance to nature ; to scenes, the impression of which the mind retains, perhaps, without knowing exactly when they were received. In the first instance our admiration of the painter's abilities may take place principally ; because, though the piece be well composed, well coloured, &c. yet little attention may have been paid to the detail of nature in its parts, to its delicate characters and graces. And in the second instance,

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stance, the beautiful resemblance of nature may make the primary impression on the mind, although the scene shall not be any way remarkable ; although the piece does not appear elaborate, neither testifies any particular or secret knowledge. To illustrate this, it may be observed, that many painters have adopted a peculiar manner, which they have managed with such skill, firmness of pencil, and ease, that, though it does not much resemble nature, yet their pictures are justly deemed excellent, and are highly valued by those, who, from their

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knowledge in the art, are pleased with the apparent skill of the master. Others have a habit of finishing so highly, that though the forms of every thing represented may be strictly natural, yet the neatness and delicacy of the artist's manner, may have carried him far beyond the truth. The most remote and evanescent parts may be touched with a degree of accuracy, not at all resembling the appearance of those objects in nature; whilst the gradations and perspective propriety are sufficiently retained by the diminution only of the parts from
the

the first grounds. Many instances may be shown on the other hand, where the genius and skill of the painter makes only a secondary consideration. One remarkable proof may be mentioned: a picture may be so well finished, and the pencilling so concealed, that it shall not be very apparent how the effect is produced; and thus, what is in fact a higher degree of merit, will still produce the same consequence, and not give us a notion of the artist's hand whilst we observe it. In short, the meanest object in nature, a stone, the stump

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of a tree, a piece of broken ground, if imitated most exactly, will immediately affect the mind with pleasure; though the painter has shown neither fancy nor taste in his choice; whilst the richest, or grandest scene, conceived and painted in the most masterly style, may want that air of truth, may be painted almost by receipt, but will also convey pleasure, either of a higher or lesser, but certainly of a very different kind. I do not mean to infer, that every picture must necessarily be under one of these predicaments, but my observa-

tion

On Landscape Painting. 15

tion induces me to think that they generally are. I was led to these remarks, which perhaps may not be very useful, by considering the falsehood of another opinion ; that a good picture will please every one, though perhaps not equally ; whereas it is evident, that it sometimes requires great judgment to admire with propriety : and it is as true, that many may be very accurate judges of painting, and yet know very little of the detail of nature ; may admire the easell more than the scene itself in nature. These distinctions may satisfy

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tisfy the doubts and repress the ridicule of the ignorant and unskilful in the art, by rendering the passion of the connoisseur more intelligible to them. May show them that there are other just causes for admiration than those which affect them, and that the difference of taste may be neither the effect of vain affectation nor mere caprice.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND THEIR MASTERS.

LANDSCAPE painting has been considered as the lowest branch of the art, yet in the list of painters, the number of those who have really excelled in this line, is comparatively very small. This is in some measure a proof, that an adequate perfection in it is not so easily attainable. It is somewhat remarkable,

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able, that Italy has produced very few landscape painters ; its delicious scenes, ruins and villas, have been left chiefly to the pencils of those Flemish artists who have travelled thither for improvement. This will appear from the great superiority in numbers upon the list, of Flemings who painted at Rome, and made the beauties of Italy the models of their taste. It may, perhaps, be not unentertaining to take a succinct view of the most eminent masters in landscape, in the different schools ; we shall not find the list very numerous.

On Landscape Painting. \$9

ITALIAN SCHOOL.

Titian.	Nicolo Poussin.
Caracci.	Gaspar Poussin.
Franc. Bolognese.	Salvator Rosa.
Claude Lorraine.	Bassan.

SECOND CLASS.

In which are also included, those artists whose landscapes are commonly subordinate to some historical design.

Albano.	Orizonti.
F. Laura.	Swanefeld.
Francesco Mola.	Luccatelli.
Tempesta.	Zuccarelli.
Marco Ricci.	

FLEMISH

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FLEMISH AND DUTCH SCHOOLS,

In the clear, bright and best manner.

Berghem.	Pynaker.
John Both.	Glauber.
Paul Brill.	Polemburgh.
Affelyn.	Hackaert.
Moucheron.	Breenburgh.
Elsheimer.	

IN THE DUTCH MANNER.

Jacob Ryfdael.	Waterloo.
Wynants.	Vander Neer.
Hobbima.	

IN THE FLEMISH SCHOOL, PROPERLY.

Rubens.	Teniers.
Van Uden.	John Brueghell.

SECOND

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SECOND CLASS.

Van Goyen.	Artois.
Her. Sachtleven.	Savery.
Jacob de Heusch.	Kecrinx.
Griffier.	Dekker.
Corn. Huysman.	Molenaer.
Fouquier.	P. Molyn.

PINTERS OF CATTLE AND FIGURES,

PRINCIPALLY.

Rosa de Tivoli.	Cuyp.
Ph. Wouvermans.	Potter.
A. Vandervelde.	Du Jardin.

IN

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IN the Italian school I have not confined the list to such as were Italians by birth : the Poussins were born in France, but went early to Rome, and painted there entirely. Swanefeld was a Fleming by birth, but travelled to Rome when young, was a disciple of Claude's, and painted entirely in the Italian manner.

AMONG the Spanish painters, Velasquez and Murillo painted landscapes admirably ; but their works of this kind are very scarce. In the French school, Patell and Vernet have

On Landscape Painting. 23

have shone most conspicuously. I shall reserve an account of the English artists for a separate part of the work. With regard to that style of composition, which is sometimes called heroic landscape, in which the two kinds of composition are united, I shall consider it in three points of view. First, where the landscape is subordinate to the historical design, being introduced either to exhibit local propriety, or merely to give a pleasing back ground, as is the case most frequently with Albano, F. Laura, Mola, and N. Poussin : this I think
is

24 *On Landscape Painting*

is the happiest, and indeed only proper union of the two branches ; because it is certainly best to give the chief importance to those objects in the piece, which are in their nature most interesting ; and by which the particular circumstances of the scene are to be justified and explained. In this case the landscape becomes the embellishment of the story, from which the eye does not wander till it has learned and considered the action represented : by these means, the effect of the piece as a whole, is greatly maintained, the transition to the parts

parts is more easy, and the attention is not divided. On the contrary, where the painter's genius and abilities are most eminent in landscape, should he be tempted, when he has wrought his piece to perfection, to introduce some historical incident which is to be subordinate to the landscape, the consequence will be as exactly reversed, as this proposition is from the former; the advantages before enumerated, will not only be wanting, but defects intirely opposite will be admitted. And to consider it in the third point of view, should

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the

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the interest of the piece be at all equally divided, it is needless to say that the eye must be distract'd and unquiet; and one essential point will certainly be lost, the simplicity of the whole. S. Rosa has avoided these defects in his favourite subjects in a masterly manner; for, though it is impossible to say which is the most excellent, his figures or his landscape, yet, by choosing such subjects as are exactly adapted to the scene, without exercising the mind in any historical action, the union of effect is not destroyed.

His

On Landscape Painting. 27

His banditti have this advantage very eminently, by their immediate reference to the scene only, and to nothing in the memory of the beholder. In some of his solemn scenes, he has introduced characters equally well conceived: a philosopher reading, or in meditation; a soldier chained, or some other incident which has sufficient dignity for his grand scenery; but at the same time has so much repose, and is so proper, that the eye can consider the whole at once. At all events, where the landscape painter means to introduce a story of any

C 2 consequence,

28 *On Landscape Painting.*

consequence, and to preserve at the same time the importance of his landscape, the scene itself should make a part of the story. A few instances may explain this. In a celebrated collection, there is a beautiful landscape of Claude, the effect of which is ruined by the story of St. George and the Dragon, which is introduced into it : it is plain, the painter, whose talents shone particularly in landscape, intended these figures as a subordinate part of the composition. One of the grandest scenes Mr. Wilson has painted, represents a land
storm,

storm, in which is introduced the story of Niobe, from which it is impossible for the eye to escape, as it contains many figures, all in action, and a huge Apollo in the middle of the sky. Mr. Wilson's known and approved powers in landscape, would lead one to think, that he also meant these figures should be subordinate. Zucarelli has been more happy in placing the incantation of the witches before Macbeth in a land storm, in a celebrated picture painted by him, as the fury of the elements is so proper upon this occasion, and assists the

30 *On Landscape Painting.*

effect of the story so well. However, I believe the chief cause of the fine effect of this picture is, that the story is evidently principal in the composition, the proportion the figures bear to the landscape, and their situation in the front line indicate this. In another beautiful picture of Mr. Wilson's representing Cicero at his villa, the objections before mentioned do not take place; the figures there are highly proper, and give a wonderful meaning to the whole scene.

To

On Landscape Painting. 31

To return to the list before given, let us first consider, that however eminent the name of Titian may be as an historical painter, it has ever been allowed, that his talents are still more conspicuous, and appear to greater advantage in landscape. The strict attention he paid to nature, enabled him to paint without the vanity and pride of some great artists, of whom so many trust to the creative powers of their own pencil, and think it beneath them to imitate where they can compose. Although their memory may afford them the necessary materials

32 *On Landscape Painting.*

materials for their work, yet there is always something which eminently distinguishes the works of those who studied from nature immediately. Titian possessed another excellence; his colouring remains fresh and brilliant to this day, a circumstance so much desired in the works of many very distinguished masters, whose colours, by growing black, lose their effect, by which means the keeping of the whole piece is often destroyed. Caracci, though his landscapes bear the strongest testimony of his great merit, yet did not copy nature with

with so much felicity as Titian; his manner has less sweetness, though not less truth: the forms of his trees, and every object he introduces, have a noble and distinguishing character, but his colouring is not so tender, nor his pencilling so delicate. However, in heroic landscape he had a great superiority, and these perhaps are not the least valuable of his works. What he wanted in those points, in which he was inferior to Titian, was given to his scholar, Bolognese, who carried the manner of his illustrious master to great perfection in his landscapes.

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scapes. The colouring of Bassan is deemed his chief excellence, as he is allowed to be incorrect in his drawing, and mean in his taste ; but even the merit of his colouring is not so evident in his landscape ; there is, however, a pleasing simplicity in his representations of nature, and abundance of truth in all his performances of this kind. The landscapes of N. Poussin have always a fine effect, and are composed with the same chaste propriety and truth that distinguish his other works. To dwell upon the praises of Claude would be useless,

On Landscape Painting. 35

useless, as his excellence is so well understood and admitted ; yet, considering that he and G. Poussin are, strictly speaking, the only masters in this school, who have given up their whole souls to this branch of the art, they may justly claim particular notice. Claude imitated nature in her most beautiful dress, and heightened all her charms, by taking every advantage in observing and representing the happiest moments of time, and every beautiful effect of sun and tranquility. His aerial tints are admirable ; the keeping and disposition of

parts

36 *On Landscape Painting.*

parts in his pictures uncommonly just and well understood ; and where ruins or buildings are introduced, they are always of the most elegant kind. G. Poussin, who loved to paint in the open fields, and to observe nature under all her variety of character, delighted more in representing land storms, in which it is impossible sufficiently to admire the wonderful effect of light and shade, the charming looseness and action of the trees, the breaking of his grounds, and the sweet harmony of tint observable in his works. Yet it must be owned, he had

had considerable faults ; his fore-grounds are sometimes too black ; the horizontal line is often carried so high, that the whole scene, instead of receding and shooting away from the eye, seems to mount ; instead of standing on an eminence, we are placed in a valley : and, as he was a little deficient in the aerial perspective, this fault in such of his compositions is more conspicuous. The buildings he introduces have a noble simplicity in their character, but they are often crowded, piled one upon another, and so scattered about the picture,

38 *On Landscape Painting.*

picture, that the eye is not sufficiently detained upon any one object or group. He is said to be a little too green in his tints, but of all the tints a mannerist can adopt, if he is resolved to be partial to one, this is the most agreeable to the eye and to nature. The merits of S. Rosa have already been celebrated. His skies, in general, are very inferior to other parts of his pictures, as they are often muddy, and want lightness. The leafing of his trees is light, but always the same: his defects, however, are constantly balanced by excellencies peculiar

On Landscape Painting. 39

peculiar to himself. Orizonti was a charming painter, and obtained that title, (his real name being Van Bloemen) by an excellence in conducting his distances, the want of which perfection we have just lamented in Gaspar. Tempesta painted with a great deal of spirit and fancy, but is frequently coarse and hard ; nevertheless, his pictures are in high estimation. F. Laura possessed many great excellencies as a painter ; his landscapes are very delicate, his ideas extremely elegant, and his method of expressing them very just. Mola had
a very

40 *On Landscape Painting.*

a very agreeable pencil, very mellow and rich ; his scenes have a great solemnity, but his local colours are not always good or proper, nor the effect of his pictures remarkable. Lucatelli painted landscape very agreeably : his scenes are elegant, and his pencilling free ; his manner is more solid than that of Zuccarelli, who is also a very pleasing painter, and imitated him. J. Mille imitated Poussin with good success : his pictures are generally well coloured, and have a pleasing effect. It would be tedious to enumerate the different and particular

On Landscape Painting. 41

cular merits of each, in the more extensive list of Flemish painters. Those which are classed together, as having adopted the clear warm manner of painting, resemble each other so nearly in their excellencies, though not perhaps in equal degrees, that the praises of each must be rather uniform. Berghem and Both, are particularly eminent among these, as Ryfdael is among those who painted more in the Dutch manner. In treating of landscape particularly, I am almost induced to give a very material preference to Ryfdael. He united

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the

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the exquisite truth of the Dutch manner, with a degree of taste not surpassed even in the Italian school. Ryfdael is never vulgar or inelegant, always natural, frequently beautiful and picturesque, and sometimes unites a grandeur of taste with each of the foregoing excellencies. To Berghem he is in many respects undoubtedly inferior ; but, though Berghem was always elegant in his designs, and admirable in the perspective propriety, delicacy of touch, and brilliancy of his pictures, yet there is a sameness in his landscapes, many of which

are

On Landscape Painting. 43

are entirely subordinate to his cattle and figures. There is not that endless variety which is seen in Rysdael's choice. In all the list of painters, no one so constantly produces that delight, which we, in a former part of this work, described as arising from the strong resemblance of nature, in all its delicate familiar characters. The scenes of Both, on the contrary, produce a pleasure very different, resulting more from our admiration of the painter's skill, fancy, colouring, &c. his pictures are always rich, warm, and elegant ; the resemblance

44 *On Landscape Painting.*

of nature not very strong, the sweet-
ness of his pencil, the lustre of his
colouring, and the luxuriance of his
imagination, always manifest. The
pictures of Moucheron bear much the
same character, as also do those of
Pynaker, Polemburgh, Elsheimer, and
Bartolomeo. Wynants had a more
peculiar manner; his works bear a
strong resemblance to nature, are
finely finished, and have a sweet ef-
fect. He delighted much in repre-
senting broken ground, sand hills, or
chalky banks, in which the transpa-
rency of his colouring is charming.

However,

On Landscape Painting. 45

However, it must be observed, that the forms of his trees are always the same; that the great attention he bestowed upon the stumps of trees, thistles, docks, &c. in his foregrounds, which are often entirely disproportioned to his landscape, frequently rendered his pictures mere representations of still life. The same objection of a want of variety in his subjects, and in the forms of his trees, holds against Hobbima: his taste is far inferior to Rysdael's, though his pencil is more mellow and luscious; his subjects are always similar, solemn

D 3 groves,

46 *On Landscape Painting.*

groves, with trees of the penile or weeping kind, richly covered with foliage, and roads leading through them ; a hut or two, compleats the scene. He had great skill in the management of light, which he always distributed in a pleasing manner : his distances are seldom very good, but there is such a look of nature in his pictures, that they never fail to please. The name of Waterloo is too dear to all lovers of landscape, to be passed without some mark of honour. Whoever has seen his etchings, will allow him to be the greatest master of simple nature

nature that ever lived. His pictures are very scarce, and his touch in painting so little known, that all kind of trash is ascribed him. I had once an opportunity of seeing a genuine picture of his, which was a most delightful performance, true nature in every part.

WE come now to those painters who adhered to the old Flemish manner, and contented themselves with the scenes their native country afforded.—The landscapes of Rubens, exhibit nature simple and unadorned.

They

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They are painted with wonderful force, and are highly valued : and yet Rubens seems to have painted more ; because, with a pencil like his, he could paint any thing. He does not appear to have delighted much in it, and though his landscapes have so forcible an effect, yet the scenes seem chosen with indifference, never either rich, warm, or beautiful in themselves. Teniers's chief skill is seen in his figures ; yet his landscapes show the same smooth delicate pencil, the same silvry tone of colour, and where they are not encumbered

bored with great Flemish houses, or with figures disproportionately large, have a charming effect, and are very valuable. Of Van Uden and Brueghel it may be said, that the first painted with great truth, but little elegance, and the last with great neatness, but no truth ; at least, as far as respects his landscapes, the colouring of which is always extravagant, and the manner neither loose nor free. Van Goyen possessed great spirit ; and, considering his pictures as mere drawings, they are many of them excellent ; but as paintings, we must be a

little

50 *On Landscape Painting.*

little disgusted, to see buildings, roads, trees, water, horses, and men, all of the same colour. The same observations may be applied to Molyn. Griffier and Sachtleven, painted views of the Rhine in a very finished and agreeable manner. It is sufficient to say in the praise of De Heusch and Hackaert, that their pictures are frequently ascribed to Both. Artois was an excellent painter in the true Flemish style; he represented nature with great force and truth; his scenes are well chosen, and his touch and colouring very masterly. C. Huysman
is

On Landscape Painting. 51

is a painter little known in this country ; yet no Flemish artist can boast of more originality in his taste than this master. His trees are of a very singular character, very tall, rich in their foliage, with the light breaking all over them.

MUCH might be said of the merits of each of the schools ; the principal ornaments of which, we have been reviewing. It is fortunate, perhaps, for the Dutch and Flemish artists, that things little similar cannot easily be compared. However, I could

wish

52 *On Landscape Painting.*

wish those who, from having made a visit to Italy, think it necessary to despise the works of the Flemings and Dutchmen, to consider that the Italians themselves act very differently ; they highly esteem the genuine performances of those artists, buy them up at large prices, and readily admit them into their cabinets,

CHAPTER

CHAPTER III.

HINTS FOR FORMING THE TASTE OF
AN ENGLISH SCHOOL;—WITH RE-
MARKS ON THE LANDSCAPE PAIN-
TERS OF THIS COUNTRY.

HITHERTO few attempts have been made towards forming an English school. And in this branch of the art particularly, our countrymen have contented themselves with imitating the ideas of other masters, when they should have copied nature only. In this country, the merely copying

54 *On Landscape Painting.*

copying from nature, would of itself give a character to the landscapes of our painters, which would be peculiar, and would sufficiently establish the taste of an English school : for England has undoubtedly many unrivalled and peculiar beauties, many characteristic charms and graces worthy of the pencil. Every foreigner is immediately and powerfully struck with the beautiful verdure that prevails here through the year, owing perhaps to circumstances not so favourable to fogs and damps, to its insular situation. Nothing is to be found

On Landscape Painting. 55

found in any country at all resembling an English park ; nature nowhere appears in so luxuriant a dress, so uncontrolled in her forms, and so lively in her tints. Willows and poplars are almost the only trees common in Flanders ; and the willows, though they grow very beautifully there, are suffered to become great trees, and are not condemned for pollards, yet have a poorness of character. The Dutchman, in his richest scenes, seldom exhibits any other foliage than that of the elm, which abounds in their low and moist grounds.

The

56 *On Landscape Painting.*

The English park and forest, afford an infinite variety of character in its trees, an endless choice of foliage. We have also a great advantage over Italy itself, in the great variety and beauty of our northern skies ; the forms of which are often so lovely and magnificent, where so much action is seen in the rolling of the clouds : all this is nearly unknown to the placid southern hemisphere. The vestiges of Roman grandeur, the fine ruins of temples, of triumphal arches, of magnificent aqueducts, and every kind of elegant architecture, extant

in

On Landscape Painting. 57

in Italy, are undoubtedly very valuable objects to the painter. But the English artist need not regret the want of these models, when so many beautiful and venerable ruins are every where to be seen in his own country. The remains of Gothic architecture have been the admiration of the most refined and classic minds. Pope, with great elegance, compares the writings of Shakespeare to those noble piles, in his preface to that author's works: the muse of Shakespeare is particularly dear

E to

58 *On Landscape Painting.*

to his own countrymen : his compositions are in the highest degree affecting to them, because they are stamped every where with something consonant to the English character, to their genius and feelings ; if, therefore, the resemblance before mentioned, as applied by the poet, is apt and just, it follows, that these venerable reliques of our ancestors, must have the same consonance of character, the same congenial beauties. Although the refined in taste may prefer the chaste and noble proportions

of

On Landscape Painting. 59

of Grecian art, to the more irregular and wild ideas of northern climes, whilst each remains perfect, and the competition is for the beauty of a whole; yet, in the venerable state of ruin, there is an awful romantic wildness in the Gothic remains, that moves the mind very powerfully. Much of the excellence and beauty of Grecian and Roman buildings is destroyed, when the general symmetry of the whole is violated; but the Gothic pile, in the parts of which so much elegance is ever allowed, loses less of its propriety by the devastations

E 2 of

60 *On Landscape Painting.*

of time. The ivyed arch, the taper-shafted column, the shattered turret, will perhaps gather new charms, when detached from the whole, from the clumsy buttresses, from other less beautiful and incongruous parts. The light and graceful spire loses nothing when deserted by its surrounding towers; but the dome will want the relief of its ample wings and extensive colonades. In surveying the remains of Grecian or Roman art, we instantly lament the loss of corresponding beauties, we deplore the ravage of time; but in beholding the

Gothic

On Landscape Painting. 61

Gothic ruin, every idea of this kind is lost in the first impression, in the sentiments of awe and enthusiasm. In fact, this particular branch of painting is entirely open to the artist for the foundation of an original merit. These are subjects which we seldom see treated but in drawings, frequently execrable; they have never formed the grand choice of the painter in this country, at least of any eminent painter. If the romantic scenes of many of the ruined castles, &c. in England and Wales, were to be represented by an artist, of talents

62 *On Landscape Painting.*

lents as excellent, would they not have a finer, a more noble and interesting effect, than the piles of building that decorate Poussin's landscapes, which have so much sameness in their forms and situations. I believe very little need be said of the Flemish and Dutch taste in architecture ; any one who has seen the pictures of Van Daelen, and other painters of these subjects among them, will be quite satisfied, that we need not borrow ideas from thence to improve our own. If the painter should pant for sublime scenes, stupendous mountains, precipices,

On Landscape Painting. 63

pices, waterfalls, he will find ample scope to improve his imagination in the Welch counties, or in Derbyshire, and the west of England : if the beautiful effects of nature, incident to lakes, should be his object, he need not leave his own country to see the most delightful in the world. The English painter will owe no small share of gratitude to the ingenious Mr. Browne, who has enriched this country with so many beautiful and picturesque scenes. He has certainly justified and fulfilled his boast, in which he declared, That it

was

64 *On Landscape Painting.*

was his sole aim in his improvements, to form scenes for the poet and the painter. He has undoubtedly succeeded. Nature comes from his hands polished and ornamented, but with no marks of violence in the reformation. I cannot avoid, upon a subject like the present, in which the forming an English school has been recommended, doing honour to the merits of another ingenious man, who, in an art so nearly allied to the one we treat of, has established, as it were, at one effort, a school for posterity, a manner peculiarly to be adopted

On Landscape Painting. 65

adopted by his countrymen in future, both for the rightful, and almost exclusive title they will have to the inheritance of it, as descending from a native of their own country, and for its excellent and original merit. This is a just tribute to the talents of Mr. Woollet.

IN the following list are included, the most eminent landscape painters of this country :

Lambert.	Barrett.
Wilson.	Marlow.
Gainsborough.	Wright of Derby.

SECOND

66 *On Landscape Painting.*

SECOND CLASS.

Wooton.	Cozens.
Tull.	Wheatly.
Smith of Chicheſ- ter.	Dean. Devis.

LAMBERT painted in a most agreeable and pleafant manner : he made Pouſſin his model, and if he cannot be allowed all his perfections, he certainly wanted all his faults ; for his pictures are never obscure in any of their parts ; the distances always recede very beautifully, and nothing is overcharged

overcharged in his compositions. He is undoubtedly a mannerist, but his manner is pleasing, his tone of colour is always the same, but it is very harmonious ; he never offends us with the gaudy glare and rawness of many modern paintings, the master tint is finely kept up, the effect is clear and sober, and the taste of design very happy. Though he imitated Poussin, yet he chose his scenes frequently from his own country, and often from real views. Wilson has established a name of higher importance ; he is a painter of great science ;
the

68 *On Landscape Painting.*

the finest effects of nature are familiar to him. No one ever understood the aerial perspective better than he, not even Claude ; in this respect his merit is unrivalled. His scenes are rich and grand, the parts extremely simple, which contribute greatly to their effect ; his foregrounds, however, generally want force, and his colouring is often too mealy and indeterminate. Perhaps, if he had condescended to pay a little more attention in making out the parts of his pictures, he would not have thought historical incidents so necessary to them ; for without doubt,

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doubt, the less a landscape is finished, the more it will require something of that kind; and the very converse of this position I believe is as true. Flaxman was born in Ireland, was led to paint by the natural bent and force of genius, which has indeed been his only instructor; he is likewise a great master of effect, but he has some excellencies more peculiar to himself. He is the only one of our painters who has given the genuine character of the countries he has lived in to his works, selecting only its richest and most beautiful features for his imitation.

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tion. Every tree he paints is distinctly characterized, his pencil is as rapid as thought, and his touch uncommonly firm. He carries his labour no farther than the producing an immediate effect requires; but the misfortune here is, that this effect may be produced before the parts bear a due resemblance to nature, as it really appears, and before the picture has acquired any great degree of merit as a piece of art. The eye, when it comes to dwell upon the scene, will, after a while, be displeased, upon observing many slovenly and neglected parts.

Another

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Another mischief too is created by this desire of dispatch, the use of tints, which produce effect very soon and easily, but are at the same time glaring and improper. Marlow is a painter of acknowledged merit and high repute ; he is perhaps not quite so happy in his trees as might be wished, but where the scene is on the sea-coast, or represents any extensive view, he is very successful. His colouring is more natural, and his pictures are better finished than those of the artist just named. In considering Gainesborough's character as a painter,

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ter, I feel strong inducments to give him the preference to all his predecessors or cotemporaries in this country. His first manner was very different from that he has now adopted. At his outset in life he appears to have studied and preferred the Flemish style, and particularly to have imitated Wynants in the breaking of his grounds and choice of his subjects; in these pictures, however, he gives a faithful representation of English nature. His churches, cottages, figures, hamlets, are all English, and are painted with strict attention to truth.

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truth. Upon maturer study and riper judgment, he seems to have aimed at something more elevated ; he began to neglect the minuter characters of nature, and to depend more upon the *chiaro oscuro*, and upon the beauty of his figures : yet he still continued to paint in the Flemish style, but it was in the broader manner, more resembling Artois. Although in this latter manner he gives us little of the detail of nature in its more delicate graces, yet his works have increased inconceivably in their merit and value, and the change has been a most

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successful

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successful one. Nothing can be more charming, forcible, and harmonious than his colouring now is, his pencil-lining is broad and masterly, the light and shade wonderfully well managed, and the effect of his pictures not to be equalled by any master, antient or modern. His figures are admirable, and being beautifully adapted to landscape, afford a strong proof how much this propriety assists the good effect of the whole. Wright of Derby is an artist of a very singular genius; he is fond of exhibiting grand effects of fire, sun, or moonlight; all which subjects

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subjects he executes with great force, spirit, and effect. His touch is extremely delicate, and his pictures show great patience in the finishing, and are remarkably transparent, the pencilling being visible throughout. His representations of the eruptions of Vesuvius, are the most sublime and celebrated of his works. Wooton painted landscape often agreeably, but his pictures must frequently stand indebted to the imagination of the beholder for a meaning; his touch and his colouring being very indistinct. 'Tull hardly repays to the world what

76 *On Landscape Painting.*

he borrows from the Dutchmen ; yet his scenes are always picturesque. Cozens is a name of considerable value to all admirers of landscape. As a painter we only lament, that he so seldom employs his pencil upon canvas. The drawings of this artist are, for composition, keeping, and effect, superior to any thing of the kind. They have a peculiar excellence, in which they resemble painting ; for the effect is not, as is usually the case, produced from outlines filled up, but is worked into light, shade, and keeping, by a more artful process, the masses

masses being determined in the first making out, or designation of the parts, and afford an harmonious effect, very unlike the ordinary compositions of scratches and lines, which are just connected and embodied by a flimsy washing.

BEFORE I conclude this chapter, some mention should be made of a name so eminent in landscape as De Loutherbourg, who resides at present in London. Were we to judge from the great prices his pictures bear, we should rank him on a level

with Gainesborough or Wilson ; but I can by no means consent to this. He has a most bewitching pencil, and lays on his colours in a manner uncommonly sweet ; his skies are clear and beautiful, and his touch exquisite ; but if his merits are great, his defects are no less obvious. His pictures are visionary, without a trait of nature, and are painted with all that French pomposity so unlike the truth of the Flemish, or the chaste elegance of the Italian manner. His cattle, trees, and every object, labour under the same charge of Affectation and extravagance.

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gance. In his talents for stage decorations, he is however unrivaled. And the two pictures of the review at Warley, painted for the King, show, that when he is fastened to his objects, when he is to copy from nature, and not compose from his own ideas, that he deserves every praise that can be bestowed upon him.

GENERAL

GENERAL REMARKS ON LANDSCAPE
PAINTING.

PARTICULAR CHARACTERS OF LAND-
SCAPE.

F OREST.	<i>i. e.</i> lawns with few trees.
Wood or coppice, with underwood.	Flat, rich, and cul- tivated country.
Heath or downs.	Broken grounds,
Barren mountains	with dells, &c.
Mountains cover- ed with hanging wood, shrubs, &c.	Rocks, precipices, with caverns, &c.
Park.	Banks of a river.
Pleasure grounds,	Lake or pool. Torrent

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Torrent or water-fall, with stones,	or hamlets, with spires, &c.
broken ground, &c.	Views of cities, villages, ruins, bridges,
Views of villages	roads.

GENERAL CHARACTERS OF LANDSCAPE.

THE SUBLIME.

With rocks or ruins, castles, mountains, precipices, waterfalls, &c.

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF NATURE.

As in forests, woods, parks, groups of trees, heath, &c.

THE RURAL.

Villages, cottages, villas, roads, rustic employments, &c.

Accidental

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Accidental characters of landscape, or variations of character from the seasons, times of day, or different phenomena of nature.

Storm of wind,	Evening.
rain, lightning,	Night.
&c.	Spring.
Calm.	Summer.
Fog.	Autumn.
Morning,	Winter.
Noon.	

FIGURES PROPER FOR SOME SUBJECTS.

For forests.—Wood-cutters, timber-carts, or the chace.

For

For parks.—Deer.

For heath or downs.—Sheep with
their shepherds.

For rocks.—Banditti, goats.

For the banks of a river.—Men or
women bathing, ferry-boats.

For the lake or pool.—Cattle water-
ing, fishermen.

For roads.—Travellers.

For hamlets, &c.—Rustic employ-
ments.

CHARACTERS OF TREES MOST BEAUTIFUL

IN LANDSCAPE.

Oak. || Beech.

Ash. || Elm.

Sycamore.

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Sycamore.	Abele.
Poplar.	Birch.
Aspin.	Thorn.

THE acacia is an elegant and delicate tree. The oak is in all its stages a most beautiful tree, the richest in its foliage, and the noblest in the forms of its stem and branches. The forest oak is very different from that which grows in closer coverts, where it is drawn up as in a nursery; the first is most romantic and stately, and the other more taper and genteel. The oak in the hedge-rows is still different,

different, often partaking more of the pollard, and surrounded by flourishing suckers, which give a most rich and luxuriant foliage. The chesnut, though a beautiful tree, particularly when in flower, seldom makes its appearance on canvas. The lime, tho' very elegant in its shape, is too formal. The willow in Flanders is a noble tree, and grows to a great size ; but with us it seldom exhibits more than a pollard, being cut for the ozi-
ers, or lopped in the hedge-rows ; but in its most beautiful and perfect state, it is rather light than rich. The elm

also

86 *On Landscape Painting.*

also suffers considerably in the hedge-rows, from the pruning hook, and is generally lopped without mercy. Of the evergreens, the firs and pines are of too formal a figure to be principal in a composition, though they are often very happily introduced, in wild scenes particularly. Rysdael frequently introduces them with infinite taste and judgment. The cedar is the most beautiful, the boldest in its character, and the most striking as a subject. Of shrubs I shall not say much, they are too insignificant, and are not sufficiently massy for the painter :

On Landscape Painting. 87

ter: there is a confusion of parts in a shrubbery, not at all suited to the canvas, and the component members taken singly, are too trifling. The ash is the most elegant of all trees, affording to the painter an opportunity of displaying the neatness and precision of his pencil more than any other: for it is seldom so massy in its foliage, as to give only a general effect of light and shade; its slender and graceful branches admit the light through all parts, the eye may distinguish every leaf, and, when well handled upon canvas,

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canvas, affords a sharpness and delicacy not to be equalled. I am sorry to understand, that Mr. Browne, and the modern improvers of land, are at declared enmity with this tree, and make it feel their displeasure wherever they meet with it, as being pernicious to every thing within its influence ; but as that influence is confined to the circumference of its own branches and roots merely, I cannot conceive it a sufficient reason for its extirpation. The elm is a rich fine tree, and often grows to a most gigantic size, in which state it is wonderfully

On Landscape Painting. 89

derfully majestic, finely proportioned in its figure, and has a beautiful massy roundness; which, with its sober hue and the crispness of its foliage, renders it a noble object for the painter. The beech is a very tall and majestic tree, the silvery colour of its stem, and the graceful sweep of its branches, are very beautiful circumstances. The birch has also a very beautiful stem, and a light spirited character in its branches and foliage. It is a common opinion, that no situation can be deemed perfectly beautiful, where water is wanting to re-

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lieve

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lieve the eye. Undoubtedly it is a most charming circumstance, and the greatest use may be made of it by the painter. It has some advantages in painting over every object. As a luminous body, under which appearance it is usually represented, it affords a most delightful lustre and brightness, and gives the painter the best opportunity of displaying the power of harmony in its united effect with the sky; when represented in shadow, it is equally happy, and has even greater advantages over every other object under the same circumstances: to explain

On Landscape Painting. 91

plain this it must be observed, that the lights and shadows in a picture, cannot be too broad, in order to produce a fine effect; and water is admirably calculated to occupy those parts of a picture which are to be massed in shadow, because it naturally wants that discrimination of parts, so much desired in every other object upon canvas, and so inconsistent with the very nature of shadow, which is, in different degrees, a privation of parts, as far as the eye is concerned.

AN agreeable opening is necessary to every picture, the eye loves to be deluded on ; but it is a common opinion with dealers and unskilful painters, that every landscape, be the subject what it may, must have a view of distant country for the back ground. This is absurd : for instance, in representing a forest scene, would it not give a far nobler idea of its depth and extent, if the eye was conducted thro' the natural openings or alleys, so that the scene should recede, yet without violating the subject, than where the distance, as it is called, is thrust all together

together into one corner of the picture, and suggests a totally new and foreign idea. When heath or downs form the scene, the subject may be carried on for the distance with wonderful simplicity and effect; and in the flat scene of rich and cultivated country, the distance may extend with the same propriety and agreement. Here, indeed, the distance cannot be carried too far; the gradations in this subject are so little interrupted, that the eye is naturally led on, and passes quietly from the first grounds to those more remote. Where the scene is

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amidst rocks and precipices, it will have a happy effect if the distance itself should express lofty objects, the waving tops of pines, or summits of pointed rocks lessening towards the horizon ; this will have the good effect before recommended, and will also give a very grand idea of the loftiness of the situation in which the painter has placed us. In fact, the carrying one subject through the whole composition, will, in all cases, give a great and striking effect of unity and simplicity. There is in nature, a strong sympathy of objects to each

each other : trees take much the same form for a great extent : nor are the violent contrasts, in which painters sometimes indulge themselves, who compose a group of trees as they would a noscgay, to be seen in nature. Many reafons concur in producing this ; the same species of trees or shrubs, will generally occupy large tracts of land from the nature of the foil, and will take the same inclinations from the influence of the wind : an attention to this circumstance, will add greatly to the simplicity so affecting in composition. Every lover
of

96 *On Landscape Painting.*

of painting, must often have admired the beauty of stems following each other; in short, this consent of parts and forms, is a great source of pleasure in all compositions. In order to give simplicity and force to a picture, it is a good method to begin with the principal object or group, and adapt the whole scene to it, to keep the light as much together as possible, and as near the centre of the picture, and to bring every object entire and clear into the canvas. It is but a poor artifice to throw the grounds off by great black stems of trees running

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ning out of the limits of the scene, or by heavy obscure banks of ground, which form a disagreeable line across the picture. The chief and most material point in painting, is to know how much appears to the eye in nature : the principal difference between the good and bad painter, consists in this knowledge, or the want of it ; otherwise, a tolerable method of handling, with good subjects to paint from, would alone make a good painter. A skilful artist is ever endeavouring to deceive the eye, to leave an impression upon the imagination

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nation of parts not shown, of parts that retire, that are lost in shadow, or in intermediate spaces ; the bungler, on the contrary, is constantly aiming at showing every thing, every leaf of the tree is to be displayed, till the whole becomes flat, and adheres to the canvas without the least appearance of air, the grounds are piled one upon the other, and the unhappy and perverse diligence of the artist, defeats his own purposes, because he does not know to what parts to confine it. The unskillful and ignorant, perpetually confound two things extremely

tremely distinct in their nature, the terms slight and unfinished: there is as much difference between a slight, and an unfinished work, as between a plain primed cloth, and a fine picture. A slight picture is finished, though not highly: the parts are all equally made out, and the keeping as perfect as in the most elaborate piece. In an unfinished picture, there is no keeping, the parts are in different degrees of forwardness towards some standard of excellence, which is only partially attained. To show this more clearly, take a slight picture,

and

and bestow more labour upon the foreground, finish it more highly, and the rest will immediately become unfinished, and will require the same additional heightening. With respect to those, who, from genius, and a fondness for the art, are desirous of making a collection, and are not yet intelligent in the petty artifices of dealers, sales, &c. I fear experience alone must instruct them; for the most lively genius, even if accompanied with a proficiency in the art, will not enable a man to become a good connoisseur, without time, observation,

tion, and an habitual acquaintance with the different schools, their masters, their touch, and peculiarities of thought and manner. With regard to pictures that have been painted upon, or mended by other hands, a little practice will generally enable any one, who is at all conversant in the art, or has tolerable discernment to discover this, for many reasons: the parts that have been painted on, will, after a while, turn black, particularly if the defect be in the sky. In order to find if a picture is perfect, carry the eye round the delicate edges

edges of the trees, which generally suffer most ; here the re-touches will always be obvious, for, in fact, they are added by inferior meddlers in the art, and have never the spirit of the master's own hand. Another circumstance will often lead to detection, in the more delicate and highly finished pictures : we do not now grind our colours near so finely as they formerly did ; and by this means the parts repaired will generally be very apparent. A clear and bright effect, which does not covet a particular light or position, is the first requisite

quisite in painting. I would caution every young collector against the buying dark and obscure pictures: he may have many inducements to commit this error, from the pleasure and self-gratulation he receives, in finding something to admire in pictures, which, before his mind had imbibed a passion for the art, and before his taste began to form, appeared to him as mere blots; an imperfection in judgment, from not having yet seen the better and clearer pictures of the same artists, whose works he is beginning to admire, may be another cause

cause of his falling into this mistake. It is a gross taste that is easily satisfied. It is not to be supposed, that these pictures came as they now appear, originally from the easel: no painter could be pleased with obscurity and indistinctness; and the ignorant in the art, may justly look with ridicule on the man who is peering for beauties in midnight, and admires a chaos instead of a representation of the graces of the creation.

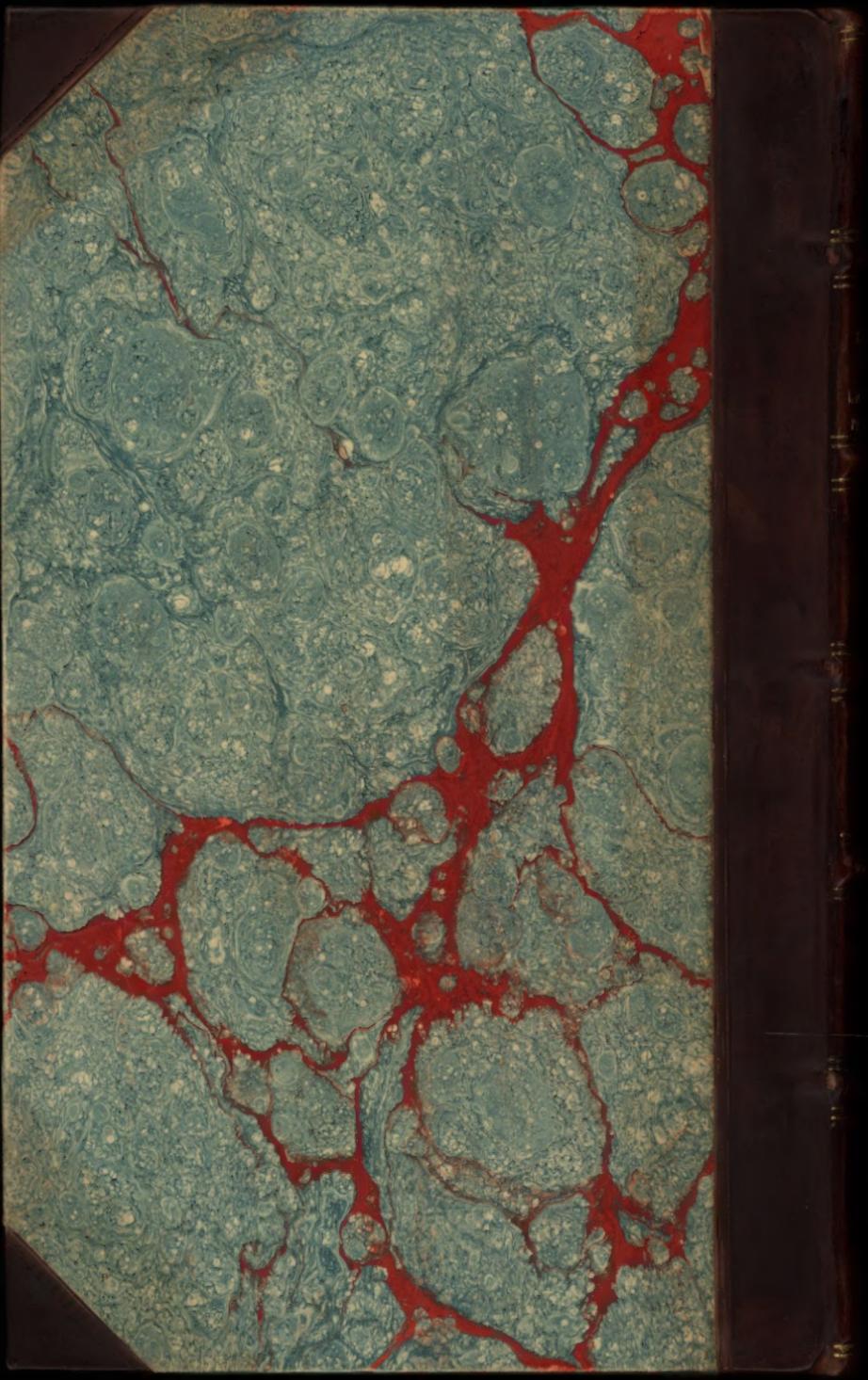
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ESSAY
ON
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PAINTING